

SANSON, THE HEADSMAN.

We translate from a German paper, the "Grafe of Zeitung," the following sketch of Sanson, the Parisian executioner, who certainly has some claim to be regarded as a hero. History cannot point to another who has borne so many of his heavy crosses of life. Sanson was the only trade he knew, and it was his fortune to wield the axe in times when scores of heads fell of a morning. He was no vulgar Jack Ketch to strangle thieves and assassins. Kings, queens, princes, statesmen, politicians, demagogues, all ranks of society, bowed before his fatal presence and never rose again.

"Have you read the French papers? Do you know who is dead? Let me enlighten you. There died in Paris on the 20th August last, an old man of 87, named Henri Sanson, Headsmen of the Department of the Seine. Methinks I see you turn up your nose, and wonder what consequence there is one executioner more or less in the world. But this Henri Sanson, my indifferent reader, was no common despatcher of low assassins, incendiaries, caners, and such rebels; he was the headsmen *par excellence*, the Nemesis of the French nation, the last net of the bloody drama of 1793. In him has a portion of France's blood-inscribed story sunk to the grave; for he was, during the first Revolution, the *Exécuteur des hautes œuvres*, through whose hands passed the heads of nearly all those who at that period perished by the guillotine in the *Place de Concord*. Henri Sanson was at that time an active young man of 29 years, attached to no party, and he struck off to-day the head of an ardent royalist, with the same composure that he would the next day that of a suspected republican. History can tell of no second executioner who has separated from their shoulders so many world-renowned heads, or marshaled so much of life "the way to dusty death." In the time when the guillotines *en permanence* held the French populace in check, from thirty to forty heads daily have been known to fall beneath his axe—it is not therefore to be wondered at that he should have acquired an unerring skill in his bloody art. Let us take a hasty peep into his day book of horrors, and let pass in review the bloody ghosts which rise out of the catastrophe of that time, to remind us of the horrors of the past.

First meets our eye the shade of the 24th January, 1791. It bears a broken crown, and what is sadder still, a broken heart. This crowned shade is Louis XVI. King by the grace of God, who stalks a warning example through the ranks of God's anointed, and calls to them—"Be just and firm."

Next rises the pale manes of the 16th October, 1793. The pallid features marked by sorrow, deep indeed, but which still has not been able to extinguish the brightness of their beauty. On the snow-white neck rests the blood drops of the guillotine. The lovely head, which once adorned with a diamond crown, now bears one of thorns, Queen of Maria Antoinette, daughter of Maria Theresa, sister of the Emperor Joseph, and the unhappy Louis's consort.

Now comes across the scene a shade whose aspect fills us with disgust. The bald head, with its load of sin, fell on the 6th November, 1793. It is Philip d'Orleans, Philip Egalité, the name of his brother's Crown. Two years before, as Louis lost his crown upon the scaffold, Philip had from his gibbet gazed through his opera glass upon the execution of his royal brother, as an opera dilettante would view the passing of a Fanny Elssler. His shade also may serve as a warning beacon through centuries to come, reminding us of the fowler caught in his own snare.

Next rises from the darkness of the grave, the giant shade of the 15th April, 1794. His powerful frame, and fierce aspect, which even in death still startled all around, point out to the Jupiter Fulminans of the revolutionary Olympus, the herculean Danton, whose voice has been compared to the thunder's roar, and his oratory to the scorching lightning's flash. Man of terror who brought the to the *xx*.

Next follows the shade of the 22d July, 1794, that of Maximilian Robespierre, and close upon his bows those of his brothers, Augustin, St. Just, Couthon, Lebas, Hebert, and seventeen others of their associates. The ninth Thermidor, a holy day eve of the French Revolution, was a holiday for our headsmen. As he had since shown to them the fair head of their king, so did he on this day exhibit to the exulting populace the distorted features of the dictator; and as they shouted their approbation each thought to himself: "Now can we sleep in peace, without the fear of being awakened by the hangman." But on that night when exhausted Paris gave itself up to sweet repose could Sanson, who had annihilated the head of the reign of terror, close his eye, for Robespierre, and the whole train of revolutionary victims gathered in a bloody circle around his bed, and closed the sleep from his eyelids; then did he fold his arms and pray—"Father in heaven, forgive me—I was but the instrument!" From that day the *Exécuteur des hautes œuvres* rested from his labors; he wiped the blood from his *xx*, and with a sigh, laid his hands in his lap.

After a lapse of forty-two years during which he had successively seen rise and pass away, the Directory, the Triumvirs, the Consulate, the Emperor Napoleon, Louis XVIII., and Charles X., he was again called by Louis Philippe to the place of execution, to try his ax's edge anew on Fieschi and his confederates, and shortly afterward's on young Alibaud. He brushed the rust from his guillotine, and carried it into effect, with the same impudence as heretofore, the degrees of the law. Louis XVI.'s head was one of the first, and Alibaud's the last which fell beneath his hands.

The Nemesis of France, Henri Sanson, now sleeps tranquilly in the church yard.

THE BALL THAT KILLED NELSON.—The musket ball which robbed England of her great naval commander, the immortal Nelson (says the Bath Herald) is now in possession of Rev. F. W. Baker, of Bathwick. It was fired, it seems, (contrary to the received account,) at random from the top of the Redoubt, by a French soldier named Robert Guillemande, who escaped wounded, and when his ship struck was taken on board the Victory. The fatal bullet was not discovered till the Victory arrived at Spithead. It had struck the fore part of the head's epaulette, and entered his left shoulder. It then descended obliquely into the thorax, fracturing the second and third ribs, and after penetrating the left lobe of the lung and dividing a large part of the pulmonary artery, it entered the left side of the spine, passed through the muscles of the back and lodged therein. A considerable portion of the gold lace, and silk chord of the epaulette, with a piece of coat, were found attached to it. The gold lace was as firmly fixed as if it had been inserted into the metal while in a state of fusion. The ball, together with the lace, &c., was mounted in crystal and silver, and presented by Captain Hardy to Mr. (afterward Sir W.) Beatty, the surgeon of the Victory, whose death was announced some time since.

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BLESSINGS ON THE MAN WHO INVENTED TETANISM!—Exclaimed we—to ourselves—a day or two since, as we met a man who, not many months ago, was one of the most bloated, raged, inveterate and loathsome worshippers at the shrine of Bacchus, that ever encouraged the "rum trade," or was a curse to himself and to a wife and children who looked up to him for support and protection. He is now a thorough-going Washingtonian; and, now, a better husband and father, or a more tidy and fresh-looking man, cannot be found. How infinitely better it is for a man to quaff the contents of the old oaken bucket than persons purchasing to swallow again will do we find to call at it.

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